



PATENT, TRADEMARK,  
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INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW

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November 12, 2004

Mail Stop Appeal Brief-Patents  
Commissioner for Patents  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Re: U.S. Patent Application of Arun Subramaniam  
Serial No. : 09/781,748  
Filed : February 12, 2001  
Title : SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROVIDING  
ANONYMOUS INTERNET TRANSACTIONS  
Docket No. : S838.12-0001

Dear Sir:

Enclosed for filing are the following papers in connection with the above-identified patent application:

1. Postcard;
2. Check in the Amount of \$170.00;
3. Fee Transmittal (In duplicate);
4. Transmittal of Appeal Brief;
5. Brief for Appellant (Original and 2 copies); and
6. Three (3) References.

Respectfully submitted,

KINNEY & LANGE, P.A.

David R. Fairbairn

DRF:amh  
Enclosures



IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

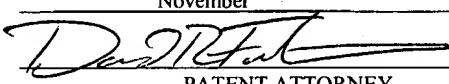
First Named		Appeal No.
Inventor	: Arun Subramaniam	
Appln. No.	: 09/781,748	
Filed	: February 12, 2001	Group Art Unit: 3621
Title	: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROVIDING ANONYMOUS INTERNET TRANSACTIONS	Examiner: P. Elisca
Docket No.	: S838.12-0001	

**TRANSMITTAL OF APPEAL BRIEF  
(PATENT APPLICATION - 37 C.F.R. 1.192)**

Mail Stop Appeal Brief-Patents  
Commissioner For Patents  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

I CERTIFY THAT THIS PAPER IS BEING SENT BY U.S. MAIL,  
FIRST CLASS, TO THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR  
PATENTS, ALEXANDRIA, VA 22313, THIS 12th DAY OF

November, 2004.

  
PATENT ATTORNEY

Transmitted herewith in triplicate is the Appeal Brief in this application with respect to the Notice of Appeal  
filed on September 15, 2004.

**Fee Status**

Small entity status under 37 C.F.R. 1.9 and 1.27 is established by a Statement previously submitted.

**Filing Fee**

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.17(c) the fee for filing the Appeal Brief is submitted.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.17(d) the fee for an Oral Hearing is submitted.

Respectfully submitted,

KINNEY & LANGE, P.A.

By: 

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DRF:amh

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Signature



David R. Fairbairn

Reg. No. 26,047

Date

11/12/04

Deposit Account No. 11-0982



IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

First Named	Appeal No.
Inventor : Arun Subramaniam	
Appln. No. : 09/781,748	
Filed : February 12, 2001	Group Art Unit: 3621
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**BRIEF FOR APPELLANT**

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PATENTS, ALEXANDRIA, VA 22313, THIS 12 DAY OF

November 2004,

  
PATENT ATTORNEY

This is an appeal from an Office Action dated June 15, 2004 in which claims 1 to 20 were finally rejected.

**Real Party in Interest**

The real party in interest is Arun Subramaniam who is the owner of the entire right, title and interest in the application.

**Related Appeals and Interferences**

There are no known related appeals or interferences which will directly affect or be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in this appeal.

11/16/2004 LWONDIM1 00000005 09781748

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170.00 OP

**Status of the Claims**

I. Total number of claims in the application

Claims in the application are: 1-20, inclusive.

II. Status of all the claims

A.	Claims cancelled:	none
B.	Claims withdrawn but not cancelled:	none
C.	Claims pending:	1-20
D.	Claims allowed:	none
E.	Claims rejected:	1-20

III.       Claims on appeal

A.       The claims on appeal are: 1-20.

**Status of Amendments**

No Amendment After Final was filed.

**Summary of Invention**

The present invention deals with online transactions. The term online transactions includes many different methods of conducting business via the Internet. As described in the background of the invention, and for purposes of putting the invention into context, one type of well known online transaction is the online auction. On-line auction sites for instance allow a user to create an alias for bidding in auctions, and keep personal account information of the user strictly confidential. See Application, p. 1, lines 24-28. In other types of online transactions, account information for online users is treated with different levels of secrecy. For instance, online sites where users post comments only, the web site host "may make no effort verify the account information and no effort to conceal the information." See Application, p. 1, line 29 - p. 2, line 9.

The present invention is a system and method for conducting on-line transactions between two registered users on a secure system, by way of posting messages to one another, while preventing the inadvertent disclosure of identifying information in the messages. Posted messages are passed through a privacy agent which looks for identifying information. In the event of finding identifying information, the privacy agent interferes with the delivery of the message containing identifying information until the user attempting to send the message either removes the information or authorizes its transmission as part of the

message. See Application, p. 2, line 23 - p. 3, line 3. Therefore, the present invention provides a system and method that allows users to conduct anonymous Internet transactions by preventing inadvertent disclosure of identifying information, unless the user removes the identifying information or grants permission to transmit the identifying information.

### **Description of References Relyed on by the Examiner**

The Examiner relies on a combination of the following references:

1. U.S. Patent No. 5,884,272, Walker et al.
2. U.S. Patent No. 6,463,533, Calamera et al.
3. U.S. Patent No. 6,286,002, Axaopoulos et al.

1. U.S. Patent No. 5,884,272 (Walker '272) discloses a system for establishing anonymous communications between two or more parties. A central controller receives and stores information received from parties. The central controller also operates to maintain anonymous communications between parties. For instance, when the central controller receives a message from one party directed to a second party, the central controller *automatically* processes the message to remove any information that would reveal the identity of the requester. Then the central controller sends the message to the second party. Thus, a party is not given an opportunity to either remove the identifying information or to authorize the transmission of the identifying information. The same steps are performed if the second party wishes to send a response to the first party. (Col. 19, line 62 - Col. 20, line 8).

2. U.S. Patent No. 6,463,533 (Calamera '533) describes a system and method for creating an unique alias that allows a website to recognize a particular user by that alias, but prevents the website from figuring out the actual identity of the user. The unique alias is created by combining the actual user identity with the address of the particular website being accessed. The combination of the actual user identity with the address of the particular website employs a number of cryptographic techniques making it difficult for a website to figure out the actual identity of a user from the alias provided to the website. (See Abstract). Therefore, the system operates to protect a user's identity from a website, not from other users.

Furthermore, Calamera '533 offers permanent protection of a user's actual identity from being discovered by a website, without opportunity for a user to decide whether to disclose identifying information to a website or not. The stated purpose of Calamera '533 is to allow a particular website to keep track of or monitor a particular alias, despite not knowing the true identity of the user behind the alias. In this way, if a user is acting inappropriately on the website, the website can move to block that user from further accessing the site. (See Abstract).

3. U.S. Patent No. 6,286,002 (Axaopoulos '002) describes a method of accessing a database using a computer system. The computer system supports the search and retrieval of information about products and services being offered for sale and being requested. Each participating user connecting to the system is associated with an agent. An agent is a program or data structure that keeps information about any purchase and sale interests of the user. That is, as the user searches and indicates interests in particular services or products, the system keeps track of this information and allows other users to see what products and services are desired and should therefore be offered. (Col. 4, lines 4-22). The patent states as an aside that a potential benefit of the system is that an user's agent could be used to purchase products from a supplier, without the supplier being aware of the actual identity of user's agent. (Col. 17, lines 4-14). Therefore, the main purpose of Axaopoulos '002 is not maintaining anonymous transactions, but providing a system for storing and searching buy and sell information on a database.

Copies of the references are provided in Appendix B.

### **Issues**

Whether any combination of the prior art of record (including the Examiner's combination of Walker '272, Calamera '533 and Axaopoulos '002), discloses a privacy agent that interferes temporarily with the transmission of a message containing information regarding an actual identity of the verified user sending the message until that user either removes the information or authorizes its transmission as part of the message, as recited in independent claims 1, 8 and 12.

Whether the requisite teaching or suggestion exists to modify the automatic removal of identifying information disclosed in Walker '272 to provide a privacy agent that interferes temporarily with transmission of a message containing identifying information until that user either removes the information or authorizes its transmission as part of the message (to the extent they are disclosed by Calamera '533 and Axaopoulos '002), as recited in independent claims 1,8, and 12

Whether Calamera '533 is in the field of applicant's endeavor or in the alternative whether Calamera '533 is reasonably pertinent to the particular problem with which the present invention is concerned.

### **Grouping of Claims**

The following groupings of claims are made solely in the interest of consolidating issues and expediting this Appeal. No grouping of claims is intended to be nor should be interpreted as being any form of admission or a statement as to the scope or obviousness of any limitations.

Claims 1-20 stand and fall together.

### **Argument**

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker '272 in view of Calamera '533 and Axaopoulos '002. To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. *In re Vaeck*, 947 F.2d 488, 20 USPQ2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991). See MPEP § 2143. Furthermore, to rely on a reference under 35 U.S.C. § 103, the reference must be analogous prior art. *In re Oetiker*, 977 F.2d 1443, 1446, 24 USPQ2d 1443, 1445 (Fed. Cir. 1992). See MPEP 2141.01(a).

The combination of Walker '272 in view of Calamera '533 and in further view of Axaopoulos '002 fails to disclose the limitation that requires a privacy agent to interfere temporarily with a transmission of a message containing information regarding an actual identity of the verified user sending the message until that user either removes the information or authorizes its transmission as part of the message, as required by independent claims 1, 8 and 12. No teaching or suggestion exists in either the prior art of record or the knowledge of a person of ordinary skill in the art to combine the method of anonymous transactions taught by Walker '272 with the method for creating a website specific alias taught by Calamera '533 and further with the system and method for storing and searching a database containing buy and sell information taught by Axaopoulos '002. Finally, Calamera '533 is non-analogous to the field of providing anonymous online transactions between two users, and further, does not solve the problem of providing secure anonymous transactions between two users as disclosed in the present invention, and therefore should not be relied on under 35 U.S.C. 103. For these reasons, all claims 1-20 are in condition for allowance.

**A. Combining The References Does Not Teach or Suggest All The Claim Limitations**

To establish *prima facie* obviousness of a claimed invention, all the claim limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art. *In re Royka*, 490 F.2d 981, 180 U.S.P.Q. 580 (CCPA 1974). See MPEP § 2143.03. Any claim depending from an independent claim that is non-obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103 is non-obvious as well. *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988).

Combining Walker '272, Calamera '533, and Axaopoulos '002 does not teach or suggest all the claim limitations of independent claims 1, 8 and 12. In particular, the references all lack the limitation included in all three independent claims requiring that a user's actual identity be protected from inadvertent disclosure by a privacy agent that interferes temporarily with the transmission of a message containing information regarding an actual identity of the user sending the message until that user either removes the information or authorizes its transmission as part of the message. Claims 1, 8 and 12 are listed in Appendix A.

For purposes of this appeal, the relevant claim limitation of claim 1 is a privacy agent, which programmatically maintains transactional anonymity between the verified users by interfering temporarily with transmission of a message containing information regarding an actual identity of the verified user sending the message until that user either removes the information or authorizes its transmission as part of the message. The relevant claim limitations of claim 8 include monitoring text message transmissions between verified users programmatically using a privacy agent, the privacy agent residing on a computer network with a web server that hosts the computer bulletin board, scanning the test message for identifying information about the sender; and interfering temporarily with transmission of the text message if the text message contains identifying information regarding an actual identity of the sender of the text message until the sender either removes the identifying information or authorizes its transmission as part of the text message. The relevant claim limitations of claim 12 include monitoring the transactional information programmatically using a privacy agent, and interfering temporarily with transmission of the transactional information if the privacy agent detects information corresponding to the actual identity of the registered user until the registered user either removes the detected information or authorizes its disclosure in the transmission.

The Examiner argued that the limitation including a system in which a transmission is temporarily inhibited until the sender either removes information identifying the sender, or authorizes the disclosure of that information in the transmission, as required in each of the independent claims, is shown by Axaopoulos '002. Specifically, the Examiner argued that Axaopoulos '002 discloses a user that can purchase products at another website using a navigation agent's identity, a unique identity corresponding to that user in the market place program, or a temporary identity for the user without the supplier knowing the identity of the user (see., abstract, col. 17, lines 4-15). However, Axaopoulos '002 does not suggest a privacy agent that interferes temporarily with transmission of a message containing information regarding an actual identity of the verified user sending the message until that user either removes the information or authorizes its transmission as part of the message. The Examiner's reliance on Axaopoulos '002 is

misplaced. Axaopoulos '002 does not teach or suggest interfering temporarily with the transmission of a message containing information regarding an actual identity of the verified user until that user either removes the information or authorizes its transmission as part of the message. Therefore, combining Walker '272 with Calamera '533 and further with Axaopoulos '002 does not teach or suggest each and every limitation of independent claims 1, 8 and 12.

The claim limitations of independent claims 1, 8, and 12 are not all taught or suggested by the cited references. Accordingly, Applicants submit that those claims are patentable. Claims 2-7 depend from claim 1, claims 9-11 depend from claim 8, and claims 13-20 depend from claim 12, therefore, they are allowable as well.

#### **B. There Is No Suggestion To Combine The Cited References**

There are three possible sources for a motivation to combine references: the nature of the problem to be solved, the teachings of the prior art, and the knowledge of persons of ordinary skill in the art. *In re Rouffet*, 149 F.3d 1350, 1357, 47 USPQ2d 1453, 1457-58 (Fed. Cir. 1998). See MPEP § 2143.01. Obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so found either explicitly or implicitly in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, and the nature of the problem to be solved as a whole would have suggested to those of ordinary skill in the art. *In re Kotzab*, 217 F.3d 1365, 1370, 55 USPQ2d 1313, 1317 (Fed. Circ. 2000). See MPEP § 2143.01. The teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination and the reasonable expectation of success must both be found in the prior art, not in the applicants disclosure. *In Re Vaeck*, 947 F.2d 488, 20 USPQ2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991); MPEP § 2143.01. The Examiner must avoid hindsight. *In re Bond*, 910 F.2d 831, 834 15 USPQ2d 1566, 1568 (Fed. Cir. 1990). A statement that modifications of the prior art to meet the claimed invention would have been well within the ordinary skill of the art at the time the claimed invention was made because the references relied upon teach that all aspects of the claimed invention were individually known in the art is not sufficient to establish a *prima facie*

case of obviousness without some objective reason to combine the teachings of the references. *Ex parte Levingood*, 28 USPQ2d 1300 (Bd. Pat. App. & Inter. 1993). See MPEP § 2143.01.

Only Walker '272 is directed towards the problem of conducting anonymous transactions. However, Walker '272 describes a system in which identifying information is automatically removed from messages between parties, therefore leading to messages that may or may not make sense to the intended recipient. Walker '272 does not describe a system in which messages with identifying information are temporarily interfered with until the sender of the message either removes the identifying information or authorizes its transmission as part of the message. The Examiner argued that Axaopoulos '002 discloses this limitation, stating "a user than can purchase products at another website using a navigation agent's identity, a unique identity corresponding to that user in the market place program, or a temporary identity for the user without the supplier knowing the identity of the user." Sept. 7, 2004 Office Action. The Examiner stated that is would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the teachings of Walker '272 and Calamera '533 by including the limitation indicated above as taught by Axaopoulos '002 because this would allow consumers to make purchases without compromising their identity and/or security.

The Examiner, in combining Walker '272 with Calamera '533 and Axaopoulos '002, does not rely on any evidence of teaching, suggestions or motivation to do so found either explicitly or implicitly in the references themselves. Rather, the Examiner claims to rely on the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, but does not provide any objective reason for combining the references. Further, none is provided in the references cited. Walker '272 teaches a method of anonymous transactions, in which identifying information is automatically stripped from messages between users. Axaopoulos '002 teaches a system and method for allowing users to access and search a database, in which a user's agent could be used to purchase a product without the supplier knowing the identity of the purchaser. There is no indication that a person of ordinary skill in the art would combine these references to allow consumers to make purchases without compromising their identity and/or security. Each reference

solves the problem of user identity in a different way, which would not lead a person of ordinary skill in the art to attempt to combine said references. Walker '272 automatically removes identifying information from messages between users, whereas Axaopoulos '002 simply mentions that in the database searching and accessing system taught, anonymous transactions between buyer and supplier are possible. Thus, no objective evidence has been presented that a person of ordinary skill in the art would combine Walker '272 with Calamera '533 and further with Axaopoulos '002, and therefore no *prima facie* case of obviousness has been presented by the Examiner.

**C. Calamera '533 Is Not Analogous Art And Therefore Is Not Relevant For An Obviousness Determination.**

In order to rely on a reference as a basis for rejection of an applicant's invention, the reference must either be in the field of applicant's endeavor or, if not, then be reasonably pertinent to the particular problem with which the inventor was concerned. *In re Oetiker*, 977 F.2d 1443, 1446, 24 USPQ2d 1443, 1445 (Fed. Cir. 1992). See MPEP § 2141.01(a). Therefore, the two criteria that have evolved for determining whether a prior art reference is analogous to an invention: (1) whether the art is from the same field of endeavor, regardless of the problem addressed, and (2) if the reference is not within the field of the inventor's endeavor, whether the reference still is reasonably pertinent to the particular problem with which the inventor is involved. *In re Clay*, 966 F.2d 656, 659, 23 USPQ2d 1058, 1060-61 (Fed. Cir. 1992). Analogousness is an independent condition that must be met before the references can be combined for an obviousness analysis. *Id.* For instance, when rejecting a claim under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over reference A in view of reference B, the secondary references must be from an analogous art in the first place, otherwise the combination of reference A and reference B itself is invalid, regardless of what the references are capable of doing if combined.

In the present invention, the "field of endeavor" is on-line transactions between verified users, in which data identifying a particular user is prevented from being inadvertently disclosed to other verified users. Transactions between verified users taking place on a plurality of web servers. Walker

‘272 describes a system for establishing anonymous transactions between parties, and further describes automatic removal of information that would reveal the identity of a party, but does not provide an opportunity for the sender to either remove information or authorize its disclosure before a message is sent. Automatic removal without input from the sender can result in editing of a message in a way that could alter its meaning or make the message unintelligible. Because of this lack of teaching by Walker ‘272, the Examiner combined Walker ‘272 with Calamera ‘533 and further with Axaopoulos ‘002.

For the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection to be appropriate, the secondary references cited, Calamera ‘533 and Axaopoulos ‘002, must also be in the same “field of endeavor” as the present invention. Calamera ‘533 discloses a system for creating a user alias based on user’s identity and the computer network site (website) that the user is trying to access. Specifically, it discloses a computer network access system 30, which sits between users 20 and the Internet 10. As described in Calamera ‘533 with respect to FIG. 3 “user terminal 20 is connected to access Internet websites 12 via system 30. System 30 includes an access server system 40 connected to communicate with a plurality of user terminals and configured to provide Internet access to those user terminals. Access server system 40 provides the primary interface between the user terminals and the Internet.” (Col. 5, lines 12-18). Thus, the computer network access system 30 acts as an access point to the Internet, and is directed to providing a system in which websites can uniquely identify users by the aliases generated by computer network access system 30 without revealing the actual identity of said users. Thus, Calamera ‘533 is not directed to a web site host for maintaining anonymous transaction between verified users, but rather to an Internet Service Provider (ISP) or Access Point provider for the user. An ISP is a different entity from a web site. Since ISPs typically provide dial-up or other connectivity services (e.g. web T.V., leased line, ISDN, DSL, etc.). In contrast, the present invention is a web-based communication system requiring validation/verification of a user and providing protections against inadvertent disclosure of actual identifying information. Therefore, the present invention and Calamera ‘533 are not in the same “field of endeavor.”

Furthermore, Calamera '533 does not describe a system for conducting anonymous transactions, but rather for allowing computer network sites (websites) to uniquely identify those accessing the website, allowing them to block access to the site's contents whenever it receives an alias associated with a disruptive user, without knowing the actual identity of the disruptive user. Therefore, Calamera '533 is not reasonably pertinent to the problem being solved by the present invention. Calamera '533 is concerned with providing a secure alias, using cryptographic means, to allow a website to uniquely identify a user without knowing the actual identity of the user. Calamera '533 accomplishes this by combining the domain name of the particular website being accessed by a user with the user's actual identity to create an alias, as shown by the flowchart in FIG. 6. In contrast, the present invention is not concerned with creating an alias at all, much less an alias that would be hard to decode from a cryptography standpoint. Rather, the present invention is directed to providing a system and method for verified users to conduct transactions without the inadvertent disclosure of identifying information by one user to another. Therefore, because Calamera '533 is not reasonably pertinent to the problem being solved by the present invention, and is not in the same "field of endeavor" of the present invention, Calamera '533 is non-analogous art that is not relevant to the present invention.

**Conclusion**

Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Walker et al. (Patent No. 5,884,272) in view of Calamera et al. (Patent No. 6,463,533) and in further view of Axaopoulos et al. (Patent No. 6,286,002), and that favorable consideration and allowance be granted to all of the pending claims 1-20.

Respectfully submitted,

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## Appendix A

1. A system for anonymous Internet transactions, the system comprising:  
a web portal, the web portal having a connection with the Internet;  
a plurality of web servers for hosting transactions between verified users, each web server in network communication with the web portal;  
a plurality of data stores for storing the transactions wherein a data store is associated with each web server; and  
a privacy agent for programmatically maintaining transactional anonymity between the verified users on the web servers by interfering temporarily with transmission of a message containing information regarding an actual identity of the verified user sending the message until that user either removes the information or authorizes its transmission as part of the message.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein the privacy agent comprises:  
a software component stored on a computer, the software agent being in network communication with each web server, the software agent programmatically monitoring text messages between the web portal and the web servers.
3. The system of claim 2, wherein the privacy agent further comprises:  
privacy rules for identifying private data within the text messages, the privacy agent programmatically interfering with text messages that contain the private data according to the privacy rules.
4. The system of claim 3, wherein programmatically interfering with text messages includes temporarily preventing a message from reaching the web servers until a sender of the message authorizes disclosure of the private data.
5. The system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of data stores comprise:  
a plurality of databases for storing records associated with users on the web server, each database being associated with one of the plurality of data stores.
6. The system of claim 5, wherein the records contain information about users, each record having information about one user, the information comprising:  
an actual identity of the one user, the actual identity of the one user being validated by a credit card transaction;  
privacy preferences associated with the one user, the privacy preferences for controlling revelation of the actual identity of the one user;  
messages generated by the one user; and

a preferred contact method for the one user, the preferred contact method being used by the system to automatically send notices to each user.

7. The system of claim 6, wherein the actual identity comprises a name, a mailing address, city, state, e-mail address, and telephone numbers, wherein the privacy preferences permit the one user to gradually reveal the actual identity to another user such that the one user may reveal the name to another user without disclosing other information.

8. A method for protecting verified users from inadvertent disclosure of identifying information on a computer bulletin board, the method comprising:

monitoring text message transmissions between verified users programmatically using a privacy agent, one of the verified users being a sender of the text message, the privacy agent residing on a computer network with a web server that hosts the computer bulletin board;

scanning the text message for identifying information about the sender; and interfering temporarily with transmission of the text message if the text message contains identifying information regarding an actual identity of the sender of the text message until the sender either removes the identifying information or authorizes its transmission as part of the text message.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein interfering temporarily with transmission comprises: warning the sender that the text message contains identifying information; prompting the sender to authorize disclosure of the identifying information; processing the text message by posting the text message to the web server if the sender authorizes the disclosure or rejecting the text message if the sender fails to authorize the disclosure.

10. The method of claim 8, and further comprising:

posting the text message to a private area on the web server; notifying an intended recipient that the text message has been posted.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein notifying an intended recipient comprises: determining programmatically to whom the sender intends to send the text message; retrieving a preferred contact method for the intended recipient, the preferred contact method specifying a means for contacting the intended recipient; and notifying the intended recipient of the text message programmatically using the preferred contact method.

12. A method for allowing anonymous Internet negotiations, the method comprising:  
prompting a user on a web server to establish an account on the web server;  
validating an actual identity of the user before registering the user and creating the  
account on the web server;  
allowing the registered user to submit transactional information to the web site;  
monitoring the transactional information programmatically using a privacy agent; and  
interfering temporarily with transmission of the transactional information if the privacy  
agent detects information corresponding to the actual identity of the  
registered user until the registered user either removes the detected  
information or authorizes its disclosure in the transmission.
13. The method of claim 12, and further comprising:  
transmitting the transactional information to the web server for storing in a data store;  
and  
providing marketing opportunities to the registered user, the marketing opportunities  
including stickers, flyers, and e-mail to other registered users.
14. The method of claim 13, wherein providing marketing opportunities comprises:  
offering the registered user a choice of marketing opportunities;  
offering the registered user an option of marketing the transactional information or of  
having the system distribute marketing materials to attract Internet  
users to the transactional information; and  
processing the choice and the option by preparing marketing materials and mailing the  
marketing materials to the registered user, and if the registered user  
chooses, displaying marketing materials on behalf of the registered  
user.
15. The method of claim 12, and further comprising:  
permitting a second user to view the transactional information over the Internet;  
requiring the second user to establish an account on the web server before permitting  
the second user to respond to the transactional information, the  
second user being required to enter information including a credit  
card number to establish an account, the information including an  
actual identity of the second user;  
validating the actual identity of the second user according to the credit card number;  
permitting the second user to post a response, the response being associated with the  
transactional information;  
monitoring the response programmatically using a privacy agent; and

interfering temporarily with transmission of the response if the privacy agent detects information corresponding to the actual identity of the second user.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein interfering temporarily with the transmission of the response comprises:

scanning the response for text corresponding to the actual identity of the second user;  
and  
processing the response by posting the response to the web server if no text corresponding to the actual identity of the second user is found or requiring the second user to authorize disclosure of the text corresponding to the actual identity of the second user.

17. The method of claim 12, wherein monitoring the transactional information programmatically comprises:

scanning text of the transactional information for phone numbers, addresses, names, e-mail addresses, and cities corresponding to the actual identity of the user.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein monitoring the transactional information programmatically comprises:

scanning text of the response for phone numbers, addresses, names, e-mail addresses, and cities corresponding to the actual identity of the second user.

19. The method of claim 12, and further comprising:

generating automatically a pin number for the user, the pin number serving as a pseudonym for the user on the web server.

20. The method of claim 15, and further comprising:

generating automatically a pin number for the second user, the pin number serving as a pseudonym for the second user on the web server.

Appendix B  
(Copies of which are attached)

1. U.S. Patent No. 5,884,272, Walker et al.
2. U.S. Patent No. 6,463,533 B1, Calamera et al.
3. U.S. Patent No. 6,282,002 B1, Axaopoulos et al.

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